

MUSEUM SERVICE

Bulletin of the Rochester
Museum of Arts and Sciences

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No. 8



Wild Soil Conservationists

By Edward T. Boardman

IT could almost be said that beavers were responsible for the settlement of Rochester. The disappointment of the white settlers of upper north America in failing to find gold was assuaged by finding themselves to be well paid middlemen in the most flourishing fur trade the world has ever known—the beaver trade—which became the northern colonists' most important source of revenue for perhaps two hundred years. In fact this profitable trade which started fairly early in the seventeenth century dwindled only after the Civil War in the U.S. During all those years rival trade companies and the governments behind them pushed exploration farther and farther into the west, northwest, and the southwest. Because water routes were the only early freight routes Niagara, and later Buffalo, became the mouth of the funnel into which all of the fur trade poured as it went eastward to the shipping ports of Quebec and New York. As is well known, the water power of Rochester made it the "Flour City" that supplied many of the Great Lakes traders.

What of the beaver itself, besides the lustrous brown fur that was once felted into hats for European men-about-town? Although rated as having but half of the intelligence of a horse or dog, beavers were outstanding builders and engineers long before humans had developed tools. They cut down trees with ease—even trees over 5' thick and 100' high. They build tight log and mud plastered hut-homes. They build wood and mud dams which vary in length from 20' or 30' to a Montana wonder 2,140 feet long. Their dams may be 10' or 12' high and some 20' thick at the base and may back water up for miles. In addition to this beavers often build canals as a simpler means of transportation of their tree-branch winter food. Such canals are about 2' wide, 1' or 2' deep, and as much as 745 feet long. Canals are sometimes built on two or three different levels with "locks" in between, the upper levels being filled by springs, the lower level by the main pond. It took human engineers a good many thousand years to match the construction feats of beavers.

The tools of beavers are often misunderstood. Large chisel-like front teeth are used in gnawing through the trunks of trees or branches. They also serve to strip off the inner bark of the branches that are the basic winter diet of beavers, and to mince up such other foods as water lily roots, duck potatoes, and eel grass.

Mud for plastering is carried in double armloads piled against the chest, and is patted into place by the forepaws. The tail is not used as a trowel but as a rudder for steering, as a sculling oar for leisurely swimming, and as a sounder of general alarms when it is whacked against the water surface by a startled beaver guard.

COVER PICTURE—Detail of Beaver Habitat Group in Hall of Natural History. Photograph by Jon Alexander

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Museum Association Lecture Program: 1949-50

ONE of the distinguished features of the Museum's educational services has been the annual lecture programs of the Rochester Museum Association. Progress in scientific photography and the skill of nationally known lecturers who are interpreters of the natural world, enhance the quality of these programs. Our series for the coming year is an excellent one, balancing as it does exploration in far climes, both in the air and under the sea, with travelogues of the tropics and presentations of bird and animal life in various parts of the North American continent.

To inaugurate the season Comdr. Finn Ronne, on Oct. 12, will present **Antarctic Adventure** with vivid pictures in full colors of exploratory flights amid the inspiring scenery of polar regions. As a contrast, Nicol Smith's lecture, on Nov. 16, will bring to us the remote world of Jammu and Kashmir, where Indian potentates still live in grandeur, amid the Himalayan mountain landscape which justifies the title, **Valley in the Clouds**.

Not alone bird lovers but anyone who enjoys nature will be pleased with the winged inhabitants of Bonaventure Island, being the daily life of gannets, gulls, and auks in Robert C. Hermes' film, **Bonaventure Diary**, to be shown on Dec. 7. The third lecturer, Dr. Walter Clark, president of the Rochester Museum Association, on Jan. 11, will bring color movies on tropical America. His **Panama Islands: the Jungle to San Blas** combines plant and animal life of Barro Colorado with a series of beautiful films of the San Blas Indians engaged in their daily living on Ailigandi Island.

A new type of exploration narrative with pictures will be introduced on Feb. 15 by Vincent Palmer, oceanographer in his **World Below the Waves**. Undersea views of sharks, barracuda, and the octopus are included with those of human divers salvaging treasure from the depths.

As South America is ever popular with our audiences, they will fully enjoy adventures in the pre-historic Inca lands of Ecuador and Peru as revealed in Herbert Knapp's film, **Travel Trails of the Andes**. This journey in color will come to the Museum screen on March 22. The lecture season will be fittingly terminated on April 19, 1950, with natural history films of the Canadian Rockies to be shown by Dr. Arthur C. Twomey of the Carnegie Institute in Pittsburgh. Wild sheep, goats, caribou, together with birds and flowers of the alpine meadows will be included in his travelogue of a mountain pack trip, entitled, **Trophies from Timberline**.

Another venture for the Museum this year will be the attractive illustrated lecture program for children of Rochester Museum Association members. This series will be presented with one exception on Wednesday afternoons at 4:30 o'clock from October to April.—W. Stephen Thomas.



Museum Service

BULLETIN OF THE
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W. Stephen Thomas, Director
MRS. MABLE S. SMITH, Editor

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AMERICAN QUILTS

Women of today are fast learning to attain skill in the handcraft of their grandmother's day. Perhaps one of the most popular of these early arts is the reproduction of handmade quilts with its thousands of tiny fine stitches.

The Genesee Valley Quilt Club was first organized in Jan., 1936, under the sponsorship of the Museum, by Mrs. Gladys Reid Holton. From a charter membership of 11, the group has grown to about 60 members. These ladies meet at the Museum on the last Thursday of each month. Mrs. Laurence I. Page, is president.

Throughout the month of Oct., the Club will show "American Quilts in the Modern Manner." About 30 prized quilts will be displayed on the second floor. The exhibit includes reproductions of early Colonial quilts, and the famous Lincoln quilt made by Mrs. Agnes Haack and presented to the Club for its historic collection. Many of the quilts are "originals," and one such design is the Victory quilt made by Mrs. Florence E. Lourette for her son who was a member of the 9th Air Force. An outstanding padded quilt is the Chrysanthemum made by Mrs. Philota M. Brydges.

NORTHEAST MUSEUMS CONFERENCE

Museum regional conferences have become a popular means for bringing together all workers in the many different kinds of these public institutions, such as art museums, history museums, and museums of science. Once again muscists of New York, Pennsylvania, and eastern Canada will convene for the Third Annual NORTHEAST REGIONAL CONFERENCE which will be held on Nov. 11 and 12, in Syracuse, New York. Miss Anne W. Olmsted, director of the Syracuse Museum of Fine Arts, will be conference chairman and her institution will act as host.

Miss Olmsted and her committee have planned a most interesting program revolving around the theme, "Museums Serve Young and Old." Sponsored by the American Association of Museums, these regional meetings are designed to provide information and stimulation to museum staff members and their families. Members of museum boards will be especially welcomed. The November gathering will include contributions on museum membership, public relations, work of historical museums, services for children, and adult education.

Syracuse Museum's Fourteenth Annual National Ceramic Exhibition which includes outstanding artistic creations will be a special attraction for all those attending the Conference. Miss Olmsted is scheduled to give an illustrated talk on this topic followed by a gallery tour of the exhibition on the evening of Friday, November 11. The following morning the session will be devoted to museum activities for children.

Museum Appoints New Anthropological Curator

NOBLE traditions in the Museum's Division of Anthropology have been established by Dr. William A. Ritchie, former Curator, who for twenty-five years has been a staff member and who resigned on August 1 to accept the position of Senior Scientist (Archaeology) of the New York State Science Service in Albany.

We are fortunate that the Board of Commissioners has appointed Alfred K. (Ted) Guthe to fill the position of Junior Anthropological Curator and to head the Division. Mr. Guthe is a young archaeologist and anthropologist with a promising career ahead of him. He attended the University of North Carolina and received his bachelor of arts degree at the University of Michigan in 1941. He did graduate work at the University of Chicago in the field of anthropology where he received his master of arts degree in June 1948. He recently partially completed requirements for the Ph.D. degree at the University of Michigan.



Alfred K. (Ted) Guthe.

Photograph by Joseph Durnherr,
Rochester Times-Union Photographer.

Mr. Guthe's archaeological field work has given him broad experience which fits him for his present post. His excavations at the Younge Site in eastern Michigan in 1935 revealed certain cultural correspondences to the Owasco Aspect of New York State. Among other field explorations were his work at Wolf and Furton Sites and the Riviere au Vase Site, Michigan, during 1936 and 1937. The year 1940 found him participating in excavations at Killarney on the north shore of Georgian Bay, and in 1947 he explored Cahone Ruin in southwestern Colorado. He was a member of the archaeological field expedition of this past summer on the Snell Site in Montgomery County, under Dr. Ritchie and jointly sponsored by the New York State Museum and the Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences.

—W. Stephen Thomas.

American Originals

By Gladys Reid Holton

A new exhibit has been installed in the Hall of Culture History in the alcove which usually displays some form of handicraft material. It is called AMERICAN ORIGINALS and is the work of early pioneer artists and craftsmen, many of them without formal training. The product is sometimes called Primitive Art. Carl Drepperd says, "American pioneer art is the painted record of America in the process of achieving a fine art of its own."

Many fine examples have been found in the museum's collection. There are three portraits, one of Cornelius DuBois of New York City who was the brother of Count DuBois and great-uncle to Emily Culver Smedley of Avon. It is signed by I. Thurphy. The other two are painted on wood and came from the Chauncey Young Estate. They are said to be of Sarah Edwards Calhoun and Mr. Calhoun. There are interestingly decorated pages from the commonplace books and early autograph albums, as well as a beautifully drawn map of South America by Teunis Bonesteel, dated 1823, and a most unusual wood carving in a bottle which depicts the Crucifixion and is complete, even to the cock that crew.

A family record for Orsamus Gilbert, born in 1770, and his wife Annes, born in 1771, is well preserved and shows three tombstones at the top for three children who died. There is a sketch in profile, not only of the mother and father but also of six children, born 1797, 1799, 1801, 1804, 1806, and 1809. The latest date written in the original record is 1814. All later dates are in a different handwriting. Charlie McCarthy has an ancestor in this exhibit. He is Ichabod Crane, and he with Mrs. Ichabod provided entertainment around 1860 in the rural school houses on the Ridge Road from Jeddo to Greece and north to Lake Ontario. On very special occasions they even came to Rochester. Ichabod, whose mate was lost many years ago, was the brain child of Azra Copp, a showman, who with the help of one Pegleg Sisson put on a program which we are told made up in hilarity what it lacked in finesse.

There are many prized possessions of the gentleman included in this exhibit—the snuff box, the tooled leather billfold, beautifully decorated tin document boxes, as well as tools such as a sickle, a handmade wooden fork, a copper and wood square with a geometric design on one side, and an Indian weathervane of iron which reminds us of the bit of history given by Jean Lipman about them: "The origin of the weathervane may be traced back to Athens, in the year 100 B.C. when Andronicus built his tower of winds and crowned it with a bronze Triton which pointed a wand in the direction of the wind. American weathervanes are recorded from the 17th century. About the first one known is the copper cockerel made in 1656 for the Dutch Reformed Church at Albany." A powder horn in the exhibit is inscribed, "T. Swicks powder horn, March 15, 1799." Another says, "Onidia, Sept. 30, '75, Zachariah Shaw—his horn."

Many decorative objects which were close to a woman's heart are shown also. They range all the way from the things which were store-bought to those made by the itinerant craftsman, as well as those created by the amateur artist for her own home. The latter includes such articles as samplers, landscapes painted on shells, sprays of yarn, shells and wax made to resemble flowers, and one very unusual embroidered picture made of chenille with the features in pen and ink drawings. It is marked, "Amey Ann Western 1806." There is a quilt with alternate blocks pieced and painted with sprays of flowers, as well as a quaint wooden block form used for fitting wigs and bonnets. The face has a very complacent expression. The exhibit also shows stencils dated 1817, made by Dr. Came of Pittsford and used in decorating painted furniture, as well as examples of beautifully etched glass, gay colored coverlets, burl bowls, shaker chairs and boxes, chalkware ornaments, a coffee grinder, trivets, a peel, butter moulds and crocks made in Rochester by Stetzenmeyer and John Burger and decorated with cobalt blue flowers and birds.

Five elaborately engraved busks are also shown. The designs are colored with India ink, one is inscribed with the following poem.

Will you come to the bow'r I have shaded for you?

Our bed shall be roses bespangled with dew.

Will you, will you, will you, will you,

Come to the bow'r? Will you, &c.

There under the bow'r on roses you lie.

With a blush on your cheek, but a smile in your eye.

Will you, will you, will you, will you,

Smile, my beloved? Will you, &c.

But the roses we press, shall not rival your lips,

Nor the dew be so sweet as the kisses we'll sip.

Will you, will you, will you, will you,

Kiss me, my love? Will you, &c.

And O! for the joys that are sweeter than dew,

From languishing roses or kisses from you.

Will you, will you, will you, will you,

Won't you, my love? Will you, &c.

Treasures from the child's world are also shown—skates, toy furniture, iron banks, wooden dolls, a very nice group of squeak or bellows toys which were made of papier-mache, and a very interesting book of several pages with quaint colored pictures.

In closing it seems fitting to quote Halger Cahill who says, "Folk art in its truest sense is an expression of the common people and not an expression of a small cultured class. It is never the product of art movements but comes out of craft traditions plus that personal something of the rare craftsman who is an artist by nature if not by training. This art is based not on measurements or calculations but on feeling, and it rarely fits in with the standards of realism."

"An Adventure in Friendship"

By Blake McKelvey, President, Genesee Country Historical Federation

THE Genesee Country Historical Federation was happily characterized several years ago by Dr. Arthur C. Parker as "*An Adventure in Friendship*." This choice phrase is in fact descriptive of all genuine historical work, for how can a student of the past gain a sense of the period he explores unless he is willing and able to share as a friend the feelings and experiences of the citizens of that day—a well-informed friend, we trust, enriched by the understanding gained from perspective, but ever sympathetic in his judgments. Only with the aid of a friendly spirit can the past be revived and brought into our experience as a living past.

Historians need a great capacity for friendship, not only for a better understanding of their documents, but also as a basis for cooperation with fellow students. To name the early historians, here in western New York, as elsewhere, is to name men noted for a host of warm friends.

It is interesting to recall how many of these friendships were with fellow historians. Henry O'Reilly, for example, enjoyed the friendly cooperation of Orsamus Turner, Frederick Follett, and O. H. Marshall among others, as numerous letters in his files reveal, and his choice collection of manuscripts was generously made available to Orsamus Turner. A generation later Geo. H. Harris of Rochester became an active correspondent of Geo. S. Conover of Geneva, General John S. Clark of Auburn, J. S. Minard of Allegheny County, and E. A. Cruikshank of Canada. Wm. H. Samson and Wm. F. Peck of Rochester were later introduced to this select historical fellowship, to which the Rev. Chas. Hawley of Auburn, the Rev. W. M. Beauchamp of Syracuse, and the great Catholic scholar, Dr. John D. G. Shea, likewise contributed. Still another historical coterie developed around the Doty's, father and son, of Genesee, whose scholarly friends included Norman Seymour and L. B. Proctor, formerly of that town, Rear-Admiral Franklin Hanford and George E. Slocum of Wheatland, and Charles F. Milliken of Canandaigua.

Thus the formation of the Genesee Country Historical Federation in June 1917 merely provided institutional continuity to a long-established regional tradition. Among the founders were the younger Doty of Genesee, Milliken and Edward G. Hayes of Canandaigua, S. D. Van Alstyne of Palmyra, F. S. Wood of Batavia, Edward R. Foreman of Rochester, and young Arthur C. Parker. Only the last is still with us, and indeed it was in considerable part due to his continued zeal that the Federation was revived, after a lapse of many years, at Letchworth Park in June 1939. That session and its delightful setting attracted delegates from thirty societies, and a similar response has marked successive pilgrimages to Nunda, Genesee, and other area villages. Last year we enjoyed a second visit to our birthplace, charming Canandaigua.

This year on October 1, we gather in Rochester for what is described as an Historical Open House. Seven local societies and institutions are cooperating to display the facilities for historical study and communication available in this city. We look forward to a continuing participation in this friendly adventure into the history of the Genesee Country.



BEAVERS BUILDING A DAM

New Museum Group. Photograph by Jon Alexander.

No mammal could be better suited to pond life than the beaver. Its heavy underfur, covered by a thick outer coat, is protection against the coldest water. Two inner combing claws on each hind foot enable a beaver to comb water out of its coat and redistribute its waterproof oil. Great webbed hind feet propel the animal in the water and on land. The heavy, 10" or 12", paddle-shaped tail is both rudder and a prop for the animal when it stands on its hind legs out of the water. The small eyes work efficiently underwater. The nose and ears have valves which automatically close when the animal submerges. Long, flexible lips enable the beaver to pull its lips together behind its front teeth when it gnaws underwater. Extra large lungs and liver give a beaver the ability to store such large quantities of oxygen that it can stay underwater as long as 15 minutes and swim a half a mile underwater. The 50 to 70 pound, 3' to 4' body of this animal is a marvellous underwater machine.

In recent years people have realized that beaver dams can cheaply impound streams. This ponding stops overfast run-off and erosion, maintains constant soil-water levels, and traps silt to produce profitable meadows as the years pass. These ponds also serve as important rearing pools for fish. A typical family of half a dozen to a dozen beavers will build and maintain a dam at the cost of a few cords of poplar and other trees a year. Small wonder that government agencies frequently consider beavers more economical and satisfactory than human engineers, and even go to the trouble of parachuting these sturdy allies into mountain valleys.

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The Rochester Museum habitat group, designed by David T. Crothers, natural history artist-preparator, shows the tree cutting and dam building activities of the beavers and a reconstruction of a dam. A beaver home or lodge is shown in the background. Typical plants grow along the shore and in the water. The scene is essentially a view of the beaver pond south of Hundred Acre Pond in nearby Mendon Ponds Park. Until recently this was a typical beaver pond and was enjoyed by many Rochesterians. However, constant sabotage of the dam by park employes has finally driven the beavers away. The dam and lodge are consequently concealed by a rank growth of weeds such as would not survive the constant passing of active beavers. This unhappy treatment of a beaver colony is all too common among back country people who cannot understand the long range value of a beaver pond and begrudge the flooding of a few acres of land.

This large diorama dedicated to beavers reflects our idea of the past and the present importance of these animals in our economy. In cash value beavers are our most important wild animals. In interest they top most other animals because of the complicated engineering connected with their community life.

SPECIAL EVENT

October 1—Afternoon Program of Genesee Country Historical Federation's Annual Meeting, Dr. Blake McKelvey, President. Election of officers. Speakers are Dr. Arthur C. Parker, Honorary President and Director Emeritus of Rochester Museum; State Historian Albert B. Corey; County Historian Arthur H. Crapsey; and Mayor Samuel B. Dicker. Showing of historical film in color, prepared by Mr. and Mrs. Francis Kirk Remington, of the history of Brighton Presbyterian Church. Award of "Horn of Plenty" to the Society having the largest attendance.—2 p.m.

MUSEUM ASSOCIATION NEWS

October 12—COMMANDER FINN RONNE will present the first lecture of the season. He will illustrate "Antarctic Adventure" with color film as he has seen it.—8:15 p.m.

October 18—Annual Meeting of the Women's Advisory Council, Mrs. F. Hawley Ward, President.—Buffet luncheon.—1 p.m.

PROGRAMS FOR CHILDREN

October 19—MURL DEUSING will tell the story of animal and bird personalities in his color motion picture show, "Outlaws in Nature." For children of members of the Rochester Museum Association.—4:30 p.m.

October 28—JUNIOR MUSEUM OPEN HOUSE—demonstrations, exhibits, dramatics, and display of club activities, sponsored by the School Service Division.—7:30 to 9:30 p.m.

October 29—Treasure Chest play "Seneca Thanksgiving," presented in pantomime by junior museum dramatics clubs. Narrated by Miss Claire L. Stone. This performance will be given twice each Saturday, at 9:30 and 10:30 a.m., through November 19. Tickets available at your school or from School Service Division.

Notes and News

A tea was given on September 1, in honor of Dr. William A. Ritchie, former anthropological curator and newly appointed senior scientist in archaeology at the New York State Museum. A farewell token was presented by Museum staff members and by Dr. Walter Clark on behalf of the Rochester Museum Association.

At its regular monthly meeting on Sept. 12, the Municipal Museum Commission spread a resolution in full upon its minutes as a tribute to the distinguished services of Dr. Ritchie. For his devoted work over a period of twenty-five years, the Commission, through its Chairman, Dr. John R. Williams, awarded him the Gold Monogram.

* * *

Dr. Edward T. Boardman, assistant director, combined a vacation with natural history field work in Florida this past summer. He took 200 Kodachrome pictures of tropical flowers and plants, marine life, and birds. These will be used to illustrate lectures.

* * *

A fossilized glass sponge of the Upper Devonian period was unearthed by Horace Hart at his country home *Hartwood Hills* near Honeoye Lake. Upon verification of the specimen by Dr. J. Edward Hoffmeister, geologist and dean of the University of Rochester Men's College, the specimen was presented to the Museum by Mr. Hart.

Many new activities have been added to the Junior Museum winter program, sponsored by the School Service Division. Fifteen clubs will meet weekly from October until the end of May, with the exception of Christmas and Easter recesses.

* * *

Mr. Albert W. Bussewitz, field naturalist, who conducted the bird classes and the series for nature leaders, and assisted the School Service Division, left this area to become director of the Bird Sanctuary of the Audubon Society at Sharon, Massachusetts.

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A selection of shells from the collection of the late Clifford L. Blakeslee will be exhibited on the second floor to the end of December. This collection represents about ten years of intensive collecting and is one of the most important in the state.

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As there was no hope of repairing the old green house located in the rear of the Bausch property, it was demolished. A much needed storage-garage will be constructed in its place.

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A red fox was brought in by former technical preparator, Melvin D. Andrews. It is now being prepared by Joseph Santens, taxidermist, to be used as a study skin.

• ROCHESTER MUSEUM OF ARTS AND SCIENCES •

1949 OCTOBER CALENDAR

4 Tuesday	Rochester Numismatic Association—8 p.m. Rochester Rose Society—8 p.m. Opportune Club—8 p.m.
5 Wednesday	Genesee Cat Fanciers Club—8 p.m. Rochester Aquarium Society—8 p.m.
6 Thursday	Rochester Cage Bird Club—8 p.m.
7 Friday	Rochester Rabbit Breeders Association—8 p.m. Model Aircraft Association—8 p.m.
11 Tuesday	Optical Society of America—8 p.m. Rochester Dahlia Society—8 p.m. Rochester Academy of Science—Photographic Section—8 p.m. Writers' Club of Rochester—8 p.m. Rochester Museum Hobby Council—8 p.m.
12 Wednesday	Rochester Academy of Science—Ornithological Section—8 p.m. Genesee Camera Club—8 p.m.
13 Thursday	Rochester Philatelic Association—8 p.m. Rochester Amateur Radio Association—8 p.m. Rochester Antiquarian League—8 p.m. Rochester Academy of Science—Mineral Section—8 p.m.
14 Friday	Film Society of Rochester—8 p.m. Rochester Folklore Society—8 p.m.
18 Tuesday	Rochester Numismatic Association—8 p.m. Rochester Button Club—8 p.m. Opportune Club—8 p.m.
20 Thursday	Rochester Needlecraft Club—8 p.m. Rochester Academy of Science—General—8 p.m.
21 Friday	Junior Numismatic Association—7:15 p.m. Model Aircraft Association—8 p.m. Institute Speakers—8 p.m. Rochester Academy of Science—Astronomy—8 p.m.
25 Tuesday	Writers' Club of Rochester—8 p.m. Optical Society of America—8 p.m.
26 Wednesday	Genesee Camera Club—8 p.m. 8 mm Movie Club—8 p.m.
27 Thursday	Rochester Philatelic Association—8 p.m. Men's Garden Club—8 p.m. Genesee Valley Quilt Club—10:30 a.m.
28 Friday	Rochester Archers—8 p.m.

SUNDAY MOTION PICTURE PROGRAM—Two showings 2:30 and 3:30 p.m.

All Color Film Program.

October 2	—WINGS TO HAWAII; HOPI INDIAN ARTS AND CRAFTS.
October 9	—WINGS TO ALASKA; MODERN SURGERY—(March of Time.)
October 16	—WINGS TO CUBA AND THE CARIBBEAN; CRAFTSMAN AT WORK.
October 23	—WINGS TO MEXICO AND GUATEMALA; HAND INDUSTRIES OF MEXICO.
October 30	—LIBERIA—AFRICA'S ONLY REPUBLIC; GROWTH OF FLOWERS.

MUSEUM HOURS

Daily, Monday through Saturday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
Sundays, from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Holidays.

—All bookings subject to change and substitution without notice.